United Nations S/PV.5215

Security Council

Sixtieth year

Provisional

5215th meeting

Friday, 24 June 2005, 10.25 a.m.
New York

President:	Mr. De La Sablière	(France)
Members:	Algeria	Mr. Katti
	Argentina	Mr. García Moritán
	Benin	Mr. Zinsou
	Brazil	Mr. Tarrisse da Fontoura
	China	Mr. Zhang Yishan
	Denmark	Ms. Løj
	Greece	Mr. Vassilakis
	Japan	Mr. Kitaoka
	Philippines	Mr. Baja
	Romania	Mr. Motoc
	Russian Federation	Mr. Denisov
	United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland	Sir Emyr Jones Parry
	United Republic of Tanzania	Mrs. Taj
	United States of America	Mr. Gerald Scott

Agenda

The situation in Afghanistan

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05-39760 (E)

The meeting was called to order at 10.25 a.m.

Adoption of the agenda

The agenda was adopted.

The situation in Afghanistan

The President (*spoke in French*): I should like to inform the Council that I have received a letter from the representative of Afghanistan, in which he requests to be invited to participate in the consideration of the item on the Council's agenda. In accordance with the usual practice, I propose, with the consent of the Council, to invite that representative to participate in the discussion, without the right to vote, in accordance with the relevant provisions of the Charter and rule 37 of the Council's provisional rules of procedure.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

At the invitation of the President, Mr. Farhâdi (Afghanistan) took a seat at the Council table.

The President (*spoke in French*): In accordance with the understanding reached at the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Arnault to take a seat at the Council table.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, and in the absence of objection, I shall take it that the Security Council agrees to extend an invitation under rule 39 of its provisional rules of procedure to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

There being no objection, it is so decided.

I invite Mr. Costa to take a seat at the Council table.

The Security Council will now begin its consideration of the item on its agenda. The Security Council is meeting in accordance with the understanding reached in its prior consultations.

At this meeting, the Security Council will hear briefings by Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan, and by Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

I now give the floor to Mr. Jean Arnault, Special Representative of the Secretary-General for Afghanistan and Head of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan.

Mr. Arnault (*spoke in French*): I would like to thank you, Mr. President, for giving me this opportunity to brief the Council on the situation in Afghanistan. I would like to thank the Council even more warmly for its decision in March to extend the mandate of the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) (resolution 1589 (2005)). That news was very positively received in Afghanistan, which I believe was partly an indication of the positive view that Afghans have of the United Nations, but also an indication of Afghan public opinion's clear understanding of the need for an ongoing international presence if lasting normalcy in the country is to be achieved.

I should like to summarize the main developments since my last briefing to the Council in March (see S/PV.5145). Unfortunately, I have to begin by describing negative developments on the security front. In March, I said that despite some improvement in security since the presidential election, complacency would not be appropriate, particularly for the United Nations, whose operations had been attacked several times. That warning has become increasingly urgent over the last three months, because the country is facing an increase in both the number and the gravity of incidents in several provinces in the country. By way of example, I can mention that in Kandahar a moderate religious leader was murdered; this was followed by a massacre in the mosque where his funeral was being held, leaving more that 40 dead and dozens wounded. I could also mention the murder of 11 Afghan employees of the Chemonics company and relatives of those employees in Zabul and Helmand provinces. Moreover, five deminers employed by the United Nations were killed in Farah province; a moderate religious leader was decapitated in his madrasa in Paktika province; and, following a sham trial, at least four Afghan police officers were executed by the Taliban in Kandahar province. The situation is

particularly disturbing in provinces in the southern part of the country, but it is also extremely serious in provinces on the border with Pakistan. In Paktika, members of traditional councils — *shuras* — a religious leader and a teacher were assassinated by extremist elements. Further north, in Kunar and Nuristan provinces and in several districts of Nangrahar, insecurity has also become worse.

The violence causes unpardonable suffering in a country that is emerging from some 30 years of ongoing conflict. It also jeopardizes efforts at rebuilding in the most seriously affected regions. After planning an increase in their presence in the southern and eastern provinces, United Nations agencies, like many other international and national bodies, have been once again obliged to keep a very low profile; this of course has an impact on the quantity and quality of rebuilding projects in these regions. For its part, the Chemonics company suspended economic projects on 1 June, and a Japanese road-building company operating in Kandahar withdrew its staff two months ago, thereby de facto stopping work.

Moreover, worsening insecurity has an impact on preparations for the electoral process that should not be underestimated. An electoral employee was killed on 2 June in Uruzgan, and there was an attack against an electoral convoy three days ago, leaving one dead and one wounded. Most of those who are standing for office in Zabul have taken refuge in the provincial capital and some have even gone to the neighbouring province of Kandahar.

Of course, the violence is not only to be blamed on attacks by extremist elements. Drugs, local rivalry, corruption and ordinary criminal acts are problems that must be tackled by strengthening the police and the justice system and by improving local administration, which itself is often a factor in the instability. But the current offensive by extremist groups, including the Taliban, is decisive in the current escalation of violence. They have more money, they have more effective weaponry, they have more powerful means of disseminating radio propaganda, and they are most definitely more aggressive vis-à-vis civilians and demonstrate greater cruelty and indiscriminate violence.

That violence is nothing new, even though its resurgence this year is a blow to the hopes that emerged after the presidential election. We experienced a similar increase in violence at the same time last year. The Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan and the international forces responded effectively to last year's extremist violence — so effectively, in fact, that on 9 October millions of Afghans were able to vote in relative safety, thereby making the presidential election one of the most memorable moments in Afghanistan's recent history. Today we need another special effort by those two Governments and by the international forces. Judging by the level of violence in the most recent incidents, the new effort must be even more intensive than the one made last year.

Without wishing to be alarmist, I would like to draw the Council's attention to the consequences of this climate of violence for the political transition in Afghanistan, which is to be completed with September's parliamentary elections. The legitimacy of the institutions elected will not be called into question. Their political grounding is demonstrated by the unprecedentedly high level of popular participation in the electoral process. However, their authority will be short-lived if the problem of insecurity is not resolved. From 1992 to 1994, insecurity made things easy for the Taliban. The current heads of the Taliban and those who support them seem to have made the calculation that, since the same causes lead to the same effects, insecurity and its impact on reconstruction will, regardless of the progress made in the political arena, be sufficient to keep the country in a situation of instability where all options remain open.

I would add that the international response to thwart that policy of destabilization cannot be limited to combat operations on the ground. We must resolutely attack the financing for fundamentalist elements, the safe havens where they train and the networks that support them, which have obviously decided to invest considerable resources to block the efforts made by Afghan authorities and the international community in the course of the past three years to stabilize the situation.

We welcome the recent high-level contacts between the Governments of Afghanistan and Pakistan. As guarantor of international security, the Security Council has a duty to follow the situation closely and to use its authority to support greater cooperation against terrorism, something which Afghanistan needs today.

(*spoke in English*)

It is against that difficult background that I am able to report some encouraging developments with regard to preparations for the elections. Since my last briefing, some important steps have been taken.

The electoral administration has now been deployed countrywide. Offices are fully operational in Kabul and in the eight regional centres, as well as in all 34 provincial capitals. The secretariat of the electoral authority currently employs 350 international and 8,000 national staff. That staffing component will gradually rise, and will reach 500 international and 200,000 national staff on election day, the bulk of whom will man the polling stations. The secretariat of the electoral authority also includes a dedicated electoral security component consisting of 36 personnel, assigned to Kabul and the eight regional offices. Like last year, physical security will be provided by the Afghan National Police and the Afghan National Army, with support from the international military forces and with the coordination of the electoral authority.

In addition, an independent Electoral Complaints Commission (ECC) has been created, which is responsible for handling and adjudicating all electoral complaints and challenges, including those against candidates and against the electoral authority and its secretariat. Its five members, three of whom are appointed by the United Nations Assistance Mission in Afghanistan (UNAMA) and one each by the Supreme Court and the Afghan Human Rights Commission, are currently supported by 15 staff.

Candidate nominations started on 4 May and ended on 26 May. With the exception of notable but isolated incidents of violence, the candidate-nomination process was generally calm. All in all, more than 6,000 candidates submitted their applications for the 249 seats in the lower house and the 420 seats in the 34 provincial councils. Roughly 12 per cent of those candidates are women, which guarantees that the quota of women in Parliament will be fulfilled. In three provinces, however, the number of female candidates is less that the prescribed quota for the provincial councils. Those seats will therefore remain vacant during this term of office.

Candidate-to-sea. ratios varied widely across the country, indicating that some elections will be much more competitive than others, in particular in the eastern and south-eastern provinces. Interestingly, and somewhat surprisingly, only 12 per cent of the candidates who registered indicated an affiliation to a political party; whereas the number of parties officially registered has reached 72. While that may be because of the electoral system chosen, most consultations indicate that the overwhelming perception with respect to political parties remains negative and that candidates prefer to run as independents, even when they have the support of a political party.

One of our key concerns about the nomination process was that, given the amount of power still wielded at the local level by commanders, the latter could have highjacked the electoral process from the very beginning by preventing others from nominating themselves. However, of the total number of candidates, only approximately 4 per cent are considered to have actual links to armed groups. In addition, only 212 Government officials have nominated themselves. That suggests that officials and commanders have not dominated the nomination process and that ordinary Afghans were not discouraged from nominating themselves as candidates. Subject to further analysis, that also suggests that Afghans will be presented with a genuine political choice on polling day.

At the same time, a countrywide assessment carried out by UNAMA and the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission indicates that, while only a handful of cases of intimidation, violence and other infringements of political rights actually occurred, there is a broad perception that people linked to armed groups are determined to prevail and will use violence and intimidation to succeed in getting elected. That perception could still undermine the fairness of the election, particularly if electoral competition should become more acute and more violence-prone in the last stages of the process. Many measures are therefore yet to be taken in order to neutralize those inclined to use intimidation and to reassure the majority of candidates and the population at large that they can vote in September without the risk of reprisals.

One such measure is the strict implementation of the electoral law that disqualifies candidates who command or belong to armed groups. The process of disarmament, demobilization and reintegration, which is nearing completion, has reduced the ability of a number of senior commanders to use large military formations to control the political process. At the same

time, many smaller commanders are still linked to local militias that can exercise undue influence in the context of provincial elections. Once all nominations were received, the Electoral Complaints Commission requested that — on an ex officio basis — the Ministries of the Interior and Defence, the National Directorate for Security, the international military forces, UNAMA and the United Nations disarmament body indicate whether any of the nominees maintained such links with armed groups. As a result, 254 nominees suspected of having such links have been identified and have been informed by the ECC that, in order to prevent their disqualification, they have until 7 July to disarm or to provide evidence that any links with armed groups have been severed.

The exercise is not without risk, as some commanders are keen to run for office and retain their military influence at the same time. The security team of the Electoral Authority is working with the national security agencies and international military forces to plan for possible security implications resulting from candidate disqualifications.

On the basis of that and other measures, we hope that the Afghan Government — supported by the United Nations and the international forces — can improve further the environment in which the electoral campaign and polling will take place and ensure that the outcome of the elections is as representative as possible of the national will, as prescribed in the Bonn agreement.

The next step in the electoral calendar will be the update of the voter registry that will start tomorrow and last one month until 21 July. This is not a comprehensive voter re-registration, but rather an opportunity for those who were unable to take part in last year's registration drive to register, and for registered voters to change their polling place to reflect the province in which they actually reside and wish to vote. Additional efforts will be made to accommodate returning refugees through the provision of voter registration in Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees encashment centres until close to election day.

I should make a special mention of funding. Indeed, funding for the elections project remains a concern. The election project is still $78.8 million short. The United Nations Development Programme expects that major pledges totalling $34 million will be disbursed shortly, bringing the gap to $44 million. As I mentioned in my last briefing, there is very little breathing space in the electoral calendar and any delay in funding will result in the inevitable postponement of election day.

In my last briefing, I mentioned that, while the delay of the election until September was not our preferred option, it was not without some advantages. One of those advantages was the opportunity to make progress on disarmament. Indeed, on 30 June, the disarmament of the former army units should end, in keeping with the timeline endorsed at the Berlin conference last year. At this point, over 60,000 officers and soldiers have been demobilized and over 49,000 have entered — and in some cases completed — reintegration into agriculture, vocational training and small business programmes. Over 90,000 personnel from the Afghanistan militia forces have been taken off the Ministry of Defense payroll, resulting in over $100 million in savings for the national budget. Over 9,000 heavy weapons have been cantoned and millions of tons of ammunition surveyed, and efforts are being made for their safe disposal. That is a significant achievement for the Afghan authorities and a first step in the larger effort of demilitarizing the country and paving the way for the Afghan national army and police.

In the coming months, the focus will shift to the next step: the disbandment of illegal armed groups, which I already mentioned in the context of the elections. Illegal armed groups — which may include as many as 180,000 men across the country — may not pose a direct threat to the State of Afghanistan, but they are a serious obstacle to the restoration of State institutions — police, judiciary and civilian administration — at the provincial and district levels. The Government is currently conducting two pilot projects, with the support of UNAMA and international military forces; negotiations with local commanders are underway; and the provincial reconstruction teams of the International Security Assistance Force and the coalition are defining the type of support that they will be required to provide.

(*spoke in French*)

Allow me briefly to raise three additional points that I believe are of interest to the Council.

The first relates to the so-called peacebuilding programme to reintegrate members of the Taliban and

the Hezb-i-Islami who have renounced violence, pledged allegiance to the Constitution and agreed to cooperate with the authorities. The members of the multiethnic national commission chaired by Mr. Mujaddedi have been chosen and will be announced soon. The commission's regional offices have not yet been set up, but procedures are under way to check the backgrounds of candidates for reconciliation and to monitor them once they return to their communities. About 150 individuals, including approximately 50 former Hezb-i-Islami and 100 former Taliban members, have benefited from the programme to date.

Like all nascent endeavours, the programme is not perfect, but some have wrongly distinguished between the openness in our approach to former Hezb-i-Islami and Taliban members and the programme for disarming local commanders. In fact, however, the two approaches are not different — the Government is reaching out to all those willing to forsake violence, without renouncing the possibility of prosecution that their past activities may call for.

My second point relates to the needs of the conflict's many victims. In resolution 1589 (2005) of 24 March, the Council welcomed the report of the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission on transitional justice and called for international support for that endeavour. Since then, the Government of Afghanistan, the Afghan Independent Human Rights Commission and UNAMA have worked together to draft a plan consisting of a series of short- and long-term measures to ensure dignity and respect for victims and their right to truth, compensation and justice. At a recent conference in The Hague, several Member States offered support for such a plan and we trust that the first actual steps will be taken as soon as possible.

I should like to say a few words on the post-electoral agenda for peacebuilding in Afghanistan. In his last report to the Council on Afghanistan, the Secretary-General offered some ideas on that topic. Since then, the Afghan Government has reiterated its hope that international cooperation will continue after the installation of the National Assembly and that it will be carried out within a framework and with specific objectives reflecting future national priorities. Those priorities would include institutional reform — which is particularly weak at the local level — the application of a coherent strategy for economic development, and combating drugs. Moreover, the Afghan Government hopes, as we do, that the new cooperation framework will offer the opportunity to improve the effectiveness of international assistance, especially in strengthening local capacity, ensuring that the State is endowed with sustainable institutions, and the closer involvement of regional countries in the next phase of Afghanistan's reconstruction. Along with the Afghan authorities and representatives of the international community, we hope on the basis of those principles to develop a platform on which the internal political forces and Afghanistan's neighbouring and distant partners can agree.

The completion of the Bonn process is in sight. Certainly, the political transition is too far ahead of the building of the State, which remains very fragile, and of economic reconstruction, which remains fragmented and distorted by the drug situation. The Government and the new Parliament must redouble their efforts to catch up on the political transition before they themselves are overtaken by the disenchantment of the people with their democratic experience. However difficult the circumstances, with the support of the international community the difficulties are not insurmountable.

The prerequisite for success in that difficult endeavour is the restoration of minimum security conditions. Without that, there is no hope. We must acknowledge that, after three years of striving, the extremists' capacity to cause harm and to stonewall in certain regions has not been diminished. There are urgent lessons to be learned without delay.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Arnault for his briefing.

I now give the floor to Mr. Antonio Maria Costa, Executive Director of the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime.

Mr. Costa: I am honoured to have been invited to address the Council, and will add just a few words to the exhaustive briefing given by the Special Representative of the Secretary-General. I will look at the situation in Afghanistan from the particular angle of drugs and crime, which I consider twin threats to the country's stability and development.

The Afghan drug problem is, indeed, both a cause and a consequence of crime. Both are the inevitable result of weak rule of law and of still-lagging enforcement and judicial capabilities. Before looking at

that bigger picture, let me first brief the Council on the latest trends in opium cultivation this year.

My Office — the United Nations Office on Drugs and Crime (UNODC) — has just completed its spring survey, combining aerial and ground observation. We estimate that in 2005 opium cultivation in Afghanistan will decline. The total area under cultivation will still be enormous: possibly well over 100,000 hectares. Even so, when we release the annual opium survey in September, the data will most likely show a reverse trend with respect to the past few years.

What are the reasons for the decline in opium cultivation in Afghanistan in 2005? Our surveyors have confirmed that the eradication campaign conducted by the Government, with foreign assistance, has yielded results. However, the decrease in cultivation must be attributed in particular to the self-restraint of farmers who simply decided to reduce the opium harvest in 2005. That good news is tempered by two concerns. First, the crop decline seems uneven nationwide. In some provinces, UNODC has actually noted a strong increase in poppy cultivation this year. Secondly, good weather conditions in the spring increased productivity in the fields. We therefore expect higher opium yields — more kilogrammes per hectare — this year than in 2004.

Several factors explain farmers' self-restraint this year. We are, no doubt, seeing a market correction at a time of abundant stocks and declining opium prices. Above all, our surveyors have noted the growing impact of the Government's persuasion campaign, as well as the impact of faith-based motivations.

It is time to reflect on the reality of present-day Afghanistan, where poverty is still overwhelming. In the affected villages, the revenue previously derived from a main cash crop — opium — needs to be replaced by alternative sources of income. This will strengthen the Government's credibility with farmers. It will also reduce the risk of a humanitarian crisis. In a recent meeting, President Karzai manifested the fear that his moral authority would be undermined in the villages if peaceful eradication and voluntary lower cultivation were not supported by development assistance. We both agreed that the current market correction towards lower opium output could easily reverse itself, thereby causing higher opium crops in 2006 and beyond.

Before concluding my comments on this issue, let me add that, in today's Afghanistan, development assistance not only translates into survival for hundreds of thousands of poor villagers; it may also mean survival for the first democratically elected Government in the nation's history.

By and large, opium farming is driven by poverty. Traffickers, warlords and corrupt officials, on the other hand, are motivated by greed, and should face retribution. That would do two things. First, it would free villagers from the bondage imposed by big profiteers and insurgents. Secondly, it would help to counter the perception that many ordinary Afghans have that counter-narcotics measures are hitting the weakest link in the drug chain — the farmers — and not those who profit the most from the drug trade.

Today in Afghanistan, drug traffickers, warlords and insurgents control quasi-military organizations and run military-type operations. An effective response depends on the deployment of corresponding force. Not long ago, I saw a real-life example of that at a drug bazaar — an open-market drug bazaar — in Helmand province's Garmser district, on the Afghanistan-Pakistan border, which has long been known as a major centre for heroin processing and trafficking. When I was in Afghanistan a few weeks ago, the Special Narcotics Forces of Afghanistan raided the bazaar, deploying heavy artillery. The local people welcomed the operation, and applauded the Afghan Minister of the Interior, Mr. Jalali, who was present. He was very pleased, and stated, "This operation demonstrates that our Special Narcotics Forces have the ability to strike anywhere, at any time". I do not think that that was an overstatement.

Indeed, I agree. Operations of this complexity are the result of badly needed collaboration between counter-narcotics and counter-insurgency forces, the result of information-sharing — which needs to be improved — and the result of mutual support against a common threat. I salute the lead nation on counter-narcotics assistance, the United Kingdom, for its tireless efforts in this regard. I also welcome the decision by some of the nations participatory in the International Security Assistance Force to consider embedding civilian drug expertise in their provincial reconstruction teams so as to foster that inter-force collaboration.

I would like now to look at the broader picture and to place the Afghan drug problem within a suitable context. Despite the progress that I have described, lawlessness still prevails in Afghanistan, as the Special Representative made clear in his briefing. State institutions are fragile and vulnerable; corruption and intimidation are rampant. Democracy and the rule of law are stymied by the absence of a viable criminal justice system.

The foundations of a credible administration of justice have been laid down, but the resources generated through drug trafficking — more than $2 billion, perhaps $2.5 billion, in 2004 — are routinely used to undermine justice. Warlords, inept provincial chiefs and corrupt officials make the Afghan opium industry more flexible and better prepared to evade controls. They help to move crops into new areas — up in the mountains, for example — where insurgents provide protection. They facilitate the logistics for the import of chemical precursors for the processing of heroin — about 10,000 tons a year, imported from abroad. They assist the money-laundering networks. In provinces where the eradication campaign failed, most notably Kandahar, we see clear examples of corruption and profiteering by local officials.

I believe that it is impossible to oppose Afghanistan's narco-industry when investigation, prosecution, the courts and detention systems are weak or non-existent. I therefore salute Germany and Italy — lead nations in related sectors — for the assistance that they have provided. I call upon all Member States to help address today's priorities in Afghanistan: the establishment an adequate rule of law and a vigorous fight against corruption.

We now have a window of opportunity and a chance to act, but that window is closing fast. The fear has been expressed that some of the more dangerous characters in the troublesome provinces will run for office in the forthcoming election, seeking impunity through parliamentary immunity. I was relieved to hear the statement in that regard made by the Special Representative a few minutes ago.

I suggest that in Afghanistan we view drug control measures in conjunction with efforts to alleviate poverty in the countryside and to restore justice throughout the country. That will help us move forward on other fronts as well and remove major impediments to democracy, security and development in general. I count on the support of, and guidance from, the Council.

The President (*spoke in French*): I thank Mr. Costa for his briefing.

In accordance with the understanding reached in the Council's prior consultations, I should now like to invite Council members to informal consultations to continue our discussion on the subject, which will begin in five minutes' time.

The meeting rose at 11.05 a.m.